

KQ5: How has the care of patients improved over time?

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS : c.1300s-1700s

Medieval patient care

1. Monasteries - the infirmary was a type of hospital ward for sick patients, separated from the rest of the monastery to stop infection spreading.

WELSH EXAMPLES: Cistercians built monasteries at Valle Crucis and Aberconwy in the north, Strata Florida in mid-Wales, and Tintern in the south. The Franciscans built friaries at Bangor, Brecon, Cardiff, Denbigh and Rhuddlan.

2. Hospitals were run by monks and nuns (named because they offered 'hospitality' - shelter to travellers, the poor and elderly to stay); there were no doctors within these hospitals; monks would pray for the souls of the patients while the nuns looked after the welfare of the patients with herbal remedies.

WELSH EXAMPLE: The Knights of St John of the Order of Hospitallers built a hospital at Ysbyty Ifan to care for pilgrims.

Voluntary charities in the 16th century - Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, most hospitals closed as well. Some were taken on by voluntary charities or town councils took over.

In London, 5 major hospitals were endowed with royal funds to care for the sick and poor e.g. St Bartholomew's Hospital serving the poor of the area of West Smithfield and St Mary Bethlehem which looked after the mentally ill.

Endowed hospitals in the 18th century - Population growth increased demand for hospitals. Wealthy industrialists paid for them e.g. Thomas Guy, a wealthy printer and bookseller who financed the establishment of Guys Hospital in 1724.

11 new hospitals were founded in London and a further 46 across the country in the growing industrial towns and cities, including Westminster Hospital in London, Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge and the Royal Infirmary Hospitals in Edinburgh and Manchester. The Bluecoat Hospital in Chester opened in 1717.

INDUSTRIAL PERIOD : c.1800s

WELSH EXAMPLES: Voluntary hospitals across Wales

- 1807 Denbigh General Dispensary and Asylum for the Recovery of Health opens.
- 1833 Wrexham established a dispensary, followed by an infirmary in 1838.
- 1837 the Glamorgan and Monmouth Infirmary and Dispensary in Cardiff.

Hospitals became centres for treating illness with herbal remedies, performing simple surgery and dispensing medicine. Treatment was usually free.

WELSH EXAMPLES: Specialist hospitals

- Stanley Sailors' Hospital, Holyhead - opened 1861 to treat sick sailors; paid for by William Owen Stanley of Penrhos; taken over by the NHS in 1948.
- Royal Hamadryad Hospital, Cardiff - opened 1866, to treat sick sailors, to stop infectious diseases such as smallpox from entering the town.

The professionalisation of nursing - The quality of nursing in hospitals was generally poor as they lacked training or medical knowledge.

Florence Nightingale was a pioneer in the way she improved standards of patient care. Between 1854 and 1856, Britain fought Russia in the Crimean War; on hearing about the poor treatment of British soldiers in the military hospital at Scutari in the Crimea, she borrowed money from the government to travel there. She found patients suffering from cholera and typhoid, housed in filthy wards.

She cleaned the wards and patients were given a regular wash, clean clothes and a change of bedding. To prevent the spread of disease, patients were separated according to their illness. The death rate went from 42 in 100 to 2 in 100.

On her return to England in 1856, she began a campaign to reform army medical services; she called for purpose-built hospitals with trained nurses, clean floors, plenty of light and fresh air and better food. In 1859, Nightingale published *Notes on Nursing*. The Times newspaper's Florence Nightingale fund raised £50,000.

In 1860, Nightingale used this money to set up training schools for nurses at St Thomas's Hospital and at King's College Hospital in London; the training was based on her principles of patient care. New hospitals like the Royal Liverpool Infirmary were built to her 'pavilion' design from *Notes on Hospitals* (1863). By 1900, nursing had become recognised as a profession.

WELSH EXAMPLE: In 1854 Elizabeth 'Betsi' Cadwaladr went to the Crimea to help nurse wounded soldiers. She disagreed with Florence Nightingale and left Scutari for a hospital at Balaclava. She worked long hours treating the wounded, nursing the sick. She caught cholera and dysentery and had to leave the Crimea in 1855.

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MODERN PERIOD : c.1900s-present day

Early 20th century reforms - Liberal governments of 1906–14 introduced welfare reforms designed to help people who fell into difficulty through sickness, old age or unemployment. The reforms included medical inspection of school pupils (1907), free school meals (1906), and old age pensions (1908). The National Insurance Act (1911) meant workers and employers making weekly contributions to give workers sickness benefit and free medical care from a doctor. It did not cover families (wives and children), the unemployed, the elderly.

The NHS - The Beveridge Report of 1942 identified 'disease' as one of the 'Five Evil Giants' and suggested that there should be a free national health service.

WELSH EXAMPLE: Tredegar and the NHS - Aneurin Bevan, Labour MP for Ebbw Vale, was appointed Minister of Health in 1945. He argued that everybody had the right to medical treatment according to need – rich or poor. Bevan was inspired by the system for looking after local workers he had seen in Tredegar in South Wales.

Bevan faced opposition to his National Health Service Act 1946 from (a) the authorities that ran hospitals and (b) the British Medical Association (BMA) who complained that doctors would make less money; he overcame this opposition.

From 28 July 1948, the NHS offered a range of services. The demand for health care under the new NHS went well beyond original predictions. In 1947, doctors issued 7 million prescriptions per month; by 1951 the figure was 19 million per month. By 1949, 8.5 million people had received free dental treatment.

Poorer people now had free access to medical treatment which previously they could not afford. The NHS has played an important part in prevention as well as cure; it has launched health campaigns to warn of the dangers of smoking, drinking alcohol and the lack of a healthy diet.

Services provided by the NHS - GP services, ambulances and Accident & Emergency Departments, hospital care (tests, treatment, operations), pharmacies, mental health services, social care (children, the disabled, the elderly), dentists, opticians.

Huge demand for prescriptions, glasses and dental treatment led to the introduction of charges in the 1950s. The NHS prolongs the lives of people, but older patients are more likely to need treatment. New scanning techniques and drugs have also increased the cost of running the NHS.

WELSH EXAMPLE: free prescriptions - The NHS has been charging for prescriptions since 1951. In 1999 the Welsh Assembly took over control of the NHS in Wales. In 2007 the Welsh Assembly changed this so that prescriptions are now free in Wales.